DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 072 849 PS 006 281

AUTHOR Kosower, Evie; And Others
TITLE A Guide to the Open Classroom.
PUB DATE [May 72]
NOTE 5p.

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS Alternative Schools; Class Management; Classroom Environment; *Classroom Observation Techniques; Cognitive Objectives; Discovery Learning; Elementary Education; *Elementary Grades; *Guides; Observation; *Open Education; Student Behavior; Teacher Behavior

ABSTRACT

This guide is designed to help observers of open classrooms find the attributes characteristic of this approach to elementary education. Checklists of characteristics are provided under the topics of ambience, teacher behavior, pupil behavior, cognitive, and organization. (KM)

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

ED 072849

PS 006281

A GUIDE TO THE OPEN CLASSROOM

by Evie Kosower
Florence Schulman
Judy Steingieser

Interest in the open classroom has greatly increased in recent years. This interest has been primarily generated by the success of Infant schools in Britain, writings on the informal classroom, mass media coverage of innovative education, and wide dissatisfaction with formal methods of instruction.

Approximately one-half of British Infant Schools have adopted the informal approach. American visitors are reporting their favorable impressions of these classrooms, via books and articles. These reports, combined with writings by authors in this country on the need for more humanistic education, have supported the growth of the movement in the United States.

Educators questioning formal methods in teacher-centered classrooms are welcoming avenues of change. Their increased interest in the open classroom has become apparent to the writers in the past two years. Teachers are asking for information and places to visit. Parents, often advisory council members, want to find out how the open classroom operates, and how their children might benefit from this type of schooling. Students preparing to teach need alternative models to observe.

The writers have had varied teaching experiences with openness. Their participation in a seminar in England on the British Primary Schools, helped to emphasize the need for a classroom guide to facilitate an understanding of the complex scene that one encounters. Their backgrounds, and their belief in

FILMED FROM BEST AVAILABLE COPY

the philosphy underlying informal education, placed them in an advantageous position in regard to developing such a tool. The writers set about to develop a guide that would help an observer in looking for the aspects and attributes of an open classroom, directing particular attention to the interactive processes involved.

After much research on observation instruments and discussion of attributes to be included, a preliminary instrument was formed which was used by the writers in visitations to open classrooms. As expected, classrooms varied in degrees of "openness", often depending on teacher contribution versus child contribution to curriculum and decision making. In some cases what teachers and principals were calling "open" were really only open on the surface, i.e. different activities were being engaged in simultaneously, but were assignments in math books or programmed reading. They were, perhaps, more individualized than open.

A one-time visit to a classroom leaves one with impressions rather than some valid knowledge about its long range goals and effects. The observations, however, pinpointed those important observable differences from traditional classrooms which were consistent in open classrooms. Not all of these are observable in each room at each visit, but they are, nevertheless, the important attributes of "openness". Some of the items in the guide were difficult to observe (eg. teachers questions are open-ended, child has commitment to process or product). They were, however, considered essential to the total conception of

open classroom processes and so remain in the guide.

A scale was not included in the final guide. A scale would have no meaning for the observer for whom the guide is intended; it would also be misleading to the teachers being visited. Evaluation is not the purpose of this tool. It has been designed to help the observer become aware of the complicated learning processes which occur through interaction with people and materials in this approach.

The early childhood developmental philosophy which underlies the open classroom approach is readily acceptable to teachers of young children who are "whole child" oriented. There is an obvious need for more understanding of this philosphy and its attitudes toward children and learning. Perhaps, there can then be more successful open classrooms.

Teachers need to have support while trying to change; for some, evolving slowly, making changes as they feel comfortable, will be the way. It is probably easier to begin as a new teacher and not have to unlearn. But the need for charge is now with the teachers we have, as well as the ones being trained.

This guide is offered with the hope that it will add understanding and support to the already growing involvement in more humanistic educational practices.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Evie Kosower, Florence Schulman, Judy Steingieser
TO ERIC AND ORGANIZATIONS OPERATING UNDER AGREEMENTS WITH THE U.S. OFFICE OF EDUCATION. FURTHER REPRODUCTION OUTSIDE THE ERIC SYSTEM REQUIRES PERMISSION OF THE COPYRIGHT OWNER.

There is a great deal being written today about informal education. Teachers, parents and students interested in the open classroom need models to observe. This tool is to help an observer look for the distinguishing attributes of an open classroom; specifically, those of time, space, materials and interactions involved in learning.

In developing this guide, we included only those characteristics which could be inferred from the environments or directly observe, however, all of them may not be observable in one visit. It is recommended that a minimum of thirty minutes be spent for each observation. The space at the right is provided for your comments.

© Evie Kosower, Florence Schulman, Judy Steingieser 1972

K.S.S. OBSERVATION GUIDE FOR THE OPEN CLASSROOM	SFVSC, May, 1972
DATE _____ SCHOOL _____ ROOM ____ TEACHER _____ NO. CHILDREN ____	
TIME _____ RELEVANT CONDITIONS OF DAY _____	
I. AMBIENCE (Room Environment and Atmosphere)	
Room is bright and colorful.	
Children's work is on display.	
There is a wide range of materials and equipment for use by children as needed at interest centers, on shelves or tables. paper, pencils; crayons; felt pens; scissors; glue, paste; magazines; art materials; newspaper; reference books; maps, globes; listening centers; record player; tape recorder; projector, radio, T.V.; tape, stapler	
Children are free to move to areas outside of room to work. (Outdoors, other classrooms, halls) What system, if any, is used to allow for this movement?	
It is possible for child to be alone and quiet.	
Tone of room implies self-discipline and ease with environment.	
Many activities go on simultaneously. Little time is spent in waiting for turn to participate in activity.	
There are many signs of enjoyment: laughter, excitement, discovery, sharing.	
II. TEACHER BEHAVIOR	
Teacher's presence is not compelling.	
Teacher is not center of attention.	
Teacher works with individuals. Teacher works with small groups. Teacher works with whole group.	
Teacher gives encouragement, approval, support.	
Teacher is a responsive person: As a resource By giving feedback By listening attentively By responding to physical contact with child.	
Teacher's questions are open-ended.	
Teacher helps children set own goals and evaluate.	
Teacher encourages child-to-child relationships.	
Teacher accepts the child's language. Teacher accepts the child's feelings.	
Teacher helps children assume responsibility.	
Teacher allows children to make decisions.	
Teacher does not require child to leave one activity for another.	
Teacher monitors and observes.	
Teacher is consistent in verbal and non-verbal communication. (Comment and body cue carry same effect).	
Teacher spends little time with discipline	

ED 006281

III. PUPIL BEHAVIOR

Children show signs of confidence and self-reliance.
- Make own choice of activity.
- Initiate activities.
- Know what to do.
- Gather and return materials.
- Get involved with activity. (alone, one other child, group, with adult)
- Maintain attention to task without adult. (alone, one other child, group)

Children work together.
- Offer help to others.
- Help when asked.
- Talk freely while working. (share, discuss, help)

Children move freely while working.
Children move freely from one activity to another.

Children talk freely to teacher.
Children interact with adults other than teacher.

IV. COGNITIVE

Subject matter is related to children's interest.

Extension of concepts develops from children's work.

There is quality in the children's work.
- Commitment to process.
- Commitment to product.
- Values own work.

There is a range of levels in the children's work.

There is evident of skill learning.
- Children are reading. (alone, w/one child, group, w/adult)
- Children are writing. "
- Children are working with math. "

Children seek and use resources on own.
Language development occurs through activities.

The environment indicates reading activities.

textbooks	creative writing
library books	activity connected writing
reference books	writing on bulletin boards and/or charts
child-made books	typewriter

Child can read whatever and whenever he needs to.
Child can read wherever he chooses.

The environment indicates math/science activities.

graphs	scales	plants	microscope
collections	measures	animals	math games

There are materials to work with.
Exploration and manipulation are going on.

There is evidence of art, music, dramatic play, movement and/or dance, as part of the program.

V. ORGANIZATION

What is the system of record keeping? (by child_____

by teacher_____

If children are working in groups, how did they get there? (Who brought about group and by what means?)_____
What are they doing?_____

What is the age span in the room?_____

Do the children interact with more than one adult during the day?_____ If so, who are the other adults?_____
(Other teacher, aide, parent helper, other volunteer?)_____
_____. Where do they work with them? In what way?

How is the class day divided in time?_____
How long may children work uninterrupted?_____

Teacher seems well organized?_____

Would you like to spend several hours a day in this environment?
_____ Why?_____

2563 Hutton Drive
Beverly Hills, California 90210